

**REMARKS**

After entry of this amendment adding claims 31-36, claims 1-36 are pending. Claims 1-30 have been amended to better describe what the Applicants regard as the invention. In particular, claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-9, 17, 21, 23 and 25 have been amended to replace certain “means” limitations with “system” limitations. The amendments to remove references to certain “means” limitations were not made for any reason related to patentability and do not introduce prosecution history estoppel because they broaden claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 7-9, 17, 21, 23 and 25. No new matter has been added.

The title was objected to as not being descriptive. The title has been amended and withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

The drawings were objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(5) because the following reference signs were not mentioned in the description: 216, 217 (figure 2), 114 and 115 (figure 3). Figs. 2 and 3 have been amended to remove reference signs not mentioned in the description. Withdrawal of this objection is therefore respectfully requested.

Claim 4 was rejected as lacking antecedent basis for “the managing printing device.” Claim 4 has been amended and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 21-24 and 26-29 were rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out an distinctly claim the subject matter which Applicants regard as the invention. Specifically, the Examiner stated that the phrases “highest data processing capability” and “lowest data processing capability” were unclear. Applicants have amended the claims to refer to the “highest information processing speed” and “minimum feature set necessary to process the print job data,” respectively. Withdrawal of these objections is therefore respectfully requested.

Claims 1-30 were rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kopecki (U.S. Patent No. 6,577,407) in view of Shima (U.S. Patent No. 6,369,909). Applicants have amended

independent claims 1, 4, 7, 10, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20 and 21 to include the feature that subsequent processing of the printing job signal is not performed by the managing printing device. Applicants have also amended independent claims 25, 26 and 30 to include the feature that print job data is received from one of the data processing devices without management of the managing printing device. Applicants respectfully assert that these features are not disclosed in either of the references cited by the examiner taken alone or in combination.

Applicants submit that the disclosures of Kopecki and Shima are limited to systems in which the selected printing device is connected to a computer network only through a primary printer and that, as a result, the features described above cannot be present in the cited references.

The abstract of Kopecki discloses only "...one or more secondary printers coupled to the primary printer by a non-network interface unit. The primary printer routes data received from the network connection system to the primary printer or to the secondary printers for printing..." Fig. 1 of Kopecki illustrates a plurality of network devices coupled to a network connection system which is coupled to only to the primary printer. All secondary printers are connected only to the primary printer. The Brief Summary of the Invention discloses only that "[t]he printer system comprises a primary printer coupled to the network connection system by a network interface unit and a secondary printer coupled to the primary printer by a secondary non-network interface unit. The primary printer routes the data received from the network connection system to one of the primary printer and the secondary printer for printing, making the secondary printer appear to a user of the network device to be directly connected to the network connection system." (Col. 2, lines 24-33.)

As the Examiner noted on page 4 of the Office Action, Kopecki discloses that "the primary printing device is the printer with direct connection to the network (col. 4, lines 44-46)." It is implicit in the Examiner's statement that primary printing device is the *only* device with a direct connection to the network. Thus, it is clear that Kopecki does not disclose that print job data is

received from one of the data processing devices without management of the managing printing device.

Shima also fails to disclose this feature of the claimed invention. Shima discloses at col. 3, lines 15-17, that an “object of the present invention is to enable incorporation of network-incompatible printers into a network through a simple and inexpensive scheme.” Shima at col. 12, lines 44-48, discloses that “[a] high-function printer 2 is connected to the host computer 1. A low-function printer 3 is connected to this high-function printer 2.” While Shima discloses a host computer linked by a communications network to both low-function and high-function printers in Fig. 4 and at col. 17, lines 13-24, that embodiment requires that the high-function printers act as a “proxy” for the low-function printers and that the high-function printers convert a print command into a language compatible with the low-function printers. Thus, it is clear that Shima also does not disclose that print job data is received from one of the data processing devices without management of the managing printing device.

With reference to claim 9, Applicants submit that none of the cited references disclose the designation of the first printing device as a managing printing device when it has the highest processing speed. The references do not teach that the managing printing device is designated based upon information obtained from other printing devices. New claim 31 includes the feature of a controller for receiving printing information from the plurality of printing apparatuses via the network line and for grouping at least two of the plurality of printing apparatuses based on the printer language information. Applicants submit that the references do not teach this feature because the references only teach grouping printing devices based on information received beforehand and do not teach grouping devices based on information obtained from individual printing devices.

The Applicants respectfully submit that they have shown the patentability of at least the independent claims and that, accordingly, all dependent claims are themselves patentable insofar as they depend from patentably distinct independent claims.

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in immediate condition for allowance. Early issuance of a Notice of Allowance is solicited.

In the event the U.S. Patent and Trademark office determines that an extension and/or other relief is required, Applicants petition for any required relief including extensions of time and authorizes the Commissioner to charge the cost of such petitions and/or other fees due in connection with the filing of this document to Deposit Account No. 03-1952 referencing docket no. 325772016800.

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Respectfully submitted,

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Attachments